

Someone Who Changed My Life

- By Beatrice Genco

Sometimes people who change your life can be someone who you seem to know forever. The change may not be sudden or spectacular, but little habits can generate big ideas that make you think about what is important in your life. The person who changed my life isn't famous but she is well known to all those who are in need of her help. Her name is Julia Masi and she has been a friend of the family for about 20 years. Julia dedicates her free time to help feed the poor by working in soup kitchens in the New York City area. She is also a volunteer with many associations such as New York Cares, Children of the City, SPAN, and Magic Hospital. She has taught me so many things that I will carry with me throughout my life.

One of the many things I have learned from Julia is how to balance time. Julia has shown me how to plan ahead so that I can study, finish all my school work, enjoy sports and still have time for my friends. She has taught me that you can do anything if you are determined and if you never give up. I've also learned that you can find anything fun or interesting if you connect it with something that you enjoy.

Last year I hated studying vocabulary, but I loved playing on my computer. Julia combined the two and showed me a website called "freerice.com" where you can play a word game and you get 5 grains of rice to donate to the poor with every correct word. She challenged me to learn a hundred new words by filling up the rice bowl. I liked playing the game so much that I learned approximately 1,000 words in just one month.

Julia always encourages me to try new hobbies and to balance everything with my studies. Academics are important to her but so are the arts. She showed me that going to the theater could help me become a better writer. She taught me that discussing a play can spark an interest in reading. She also helped me develop an interest in social studies and compare what I learned in class to what is going on in the city.

We talk a lot about immigration, world hunger and politics. We have been brainstorming about how to make things better for families during the holidays. My mom and I have been helping by picking up coats for one of Julia's clothing drives. We always donate to her annual toy drive, but this year we will be helping her by sorting and wrapping the donated toys.

If it wasn't for Julia I probably wouldn't have realized how easy it is to help the poor. There are so many ways that one person can make a big difference. I've learned to be more appreciative of what I own. I am thankful for the opportunities that I have been given. I will continue to think of ways to help those less fortunate for the rest of my life.

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